

**READING BOROUGH COUNCIL  
REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES**

<b>TO:</b>	<b>TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE</b>		
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>15 JUNE 2016</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM:</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>TITLE:</b>	<b>ROAD SAFETY AND ROAD CASUALTIES IN READING BASINGSTOKE ROAD WITH BUCKLAND ROAD &amp; HIGHMOOR ROAD JUNCTION WITH ALBERT ROAD</b>		
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**1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Sub-committee of road safety within Reading and the on-going police investigations into the sad events that resulted in fatalities at Basingstoke Road (Whitley) and Highmoor Road (Thames).

**2. RECOMMENDED ACTION**

- 2.1 That the Sub-committee note the contents of this report.
- 2.2 That the decision taken by the Sub-committee in January 2015, regarding the Highmoor Road/Albert Road junction, be implemented, despite the lack of any changes to the TSRDG introduced in April 2016.
- 2.3 Once the change in priorities has been introduced the junction remains under review in line with our statutory duty.

**3. POLICY CONTEXT**

- 3.1 The government expects Local Authorities to implement road safety schemes to address sites with a history of personal injury collisions, and where possible link these with the promotion of sustainable travel.

3.2 Under the 1988 Road Traffic Act, the Highway Authority has a duty to take steps to both reduce and prevent collisions on the road network. In addition under the Traffic Management Act 2004 the authority has a duty to maintain and manage the road network and secure the safe and expeditious movement of traffic. (Traffic is defined to include pedestrians). It is therefore imperative that the authority continues to strive to reduce road casualties to ensure the network is safe for all users.

#### 4. ROAD SAFETY AND CASUALTY REDUCTION

4.1 Prior to 2010 central Government set road safety targets for Local Highway Authorities (LHAs) and provided a ring-fenced budget for LHAs to achieve those targets. Most LHAs operated within a Safer Roads Partnership with their respective police authority where speed camera revenue also assisted in a partnership approach to road safety. However, with the change of political leadership in 2010 central Government abolished the Road Safety Partnerships and removed the ring fenced road safety budget. In addition, national targets for casualty reduction were also removed by central Government leaving LHAs to set their own targets and find their own road safety funding. Since 2010 funding from central Government for local highway schemes including casualty reduction initiatives has continued to reduce. However, Reading has fared better than most LHAs with capital schemes such as the Pinch Point initiative and Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) that has enabled us to maintain our road safety work and casualty reduction schemes. Now that these programmes have ended our annual Local Transport Plan capital funding allocation from Government was £1.58M for 2015/16 and the same amount again this year 2016/17. This compares to LTP capital funding at its peak in 05/06 at £8.5M which fell to £3.9M in 09/10. The current funding of £1.58M is used to deliver and develop all aspects of our LTP including our contribution to the third Thames crossing study and development of schemes such as Green Park railway station.

4.2 Since 2010 our major scheme funding (LSTF & pinch point) has led to significant road safety projects such as:

Mill Lane junction with the IDR and London Street - a redesign of the junction and replacement of the traffic signals (introduction PUFFIN pedestrian facilities) has significantly improved pedestrian safety. Prior to the works this junction suffered from a history of pedestrian casualties. The latest 3-year casualty record shows only two pedestrian casualties both of which involved intoxicated pedestrians who ran into the road.

Various junctions were subject to up-grades as a part of the LSTF programme with similar casualty reduction successes. Most noticeably Cemetery Junction received a re-design and full traffic signal up-grade with PUFFIN pedestrian facilities. The Cemetery Junction area has suffered from a history of Killed & Serious Injuries (KSIs) as a result of collisions. Although a full 3-year comparison cannot be made yet the early indications are very positive.

We have also maintained our own local road safety policy and agenda which in recent years has focused on reducing pedestrian casualties. We have installed a variety of facilities across Reading to help pedestrians cross the road. Examples can be found in School Road, Tilehurst and Berkeley Avenue with a number of pedestrian islands introduced. New formal crossings have been installed on Northumberland Avenue, Southcote Lane, Dee Road and Napier Road. Other local road safety projects include the double mini-roundabout arrangement at Prospect Street junction with Gosbrook Road. This introduced a new type of road marking to highlight pedestrian crossing points and over-run areas of the mini-roundabouts. This scheme was completed 18 months ago and is still subject to the road safety audit process.

20mph has been promoted in areas with east Reading being the most significant. Although the east Reading project has been held up by delays within central Government the initial signing of the new lower limit has now been completed. There are other area schemes now being considered for 20mph.

Road safety around schools and on routes to schools has also been a focus over the past few years with growing interest in school travel planning. Additional resources have become available in some areas through our own primary school expansion programme. This is currently providing the opportunity to look back on the success of the safer routes to schools initiative of the early 2000s and encourage safe and sustainable school travel today.

## 5. BASINGSTOKE ROAD AND HIGHMOOR ROAD FATALITIES

- 5.1 All road accidents create shock and concern amongst residents, local councillors and officers alike, particularly when there has been loss of life. Whilst it will come as no comfort for those affected by the two recent fatalities at Basingstoke Road and Highmoor Road fatal accidents are relatively rare in Reading. Over the past 10 years there has been an average of two fatalities per year within the Borough area. In 2005 there were no recorded fatalities on the roads within the Borough in contrast to 2014 where police investigated four deaths. Around 50% of the deaths investigated by the police resulted

in court cases and prison sentences for those found guilty of causing death by their actions.

- 5.2 Both accidents in Basingstoke Road and Highmoor Road are being investigated by the police and we have already been involved in site visits as a part of their investigation. Some details of what happened at Basingstoke Road and Highmoor Road have been reported by the local media. This is particularly so in the death of Lauren Heath on Basingstoke Road where her baby survived the accident as a result of her actions. Our heartfelt sympathies go out to Lauren Heath and her family & friends and also to the family of the gentleman killed at Highmoor Road junction with Albert Road more recently.
- 5.3 As the Highway Authority we have a duty to determine whether such accidents are related to defects in the highway and, if this is the case, to accept responsibility for any appropriate action. Where a fatal accident does occur we usually receive notification within 24 hours and then be involved in the police investigation. This can be quite a detailed process where officers can be exposed to distressing information. We employ some very experienced officers that throughout their careers (not just with Reading) have been involved in a number of fatal accident investigations. This has resulted in officers giving statements and attending court cases to present evidence that has been vital in securing successful criminal convictions.
- 5.4 Safety concern at Highmoor Road junction with Albert Road has been reported through TM Sub-committee previously. This reporting process included an assessment of a number of options following objections to a proposal to close the west side of Highmoor Road to eastbound traffic. As a result of this series of reports a decision was taken to change priorities at the junction subject to the revision of the Traffic Sign Regulations & General Directions (TSRGD) expected in 2015. The Government did not complete their revision of the TSRGD until it was finally brought into force on 22<sup>nd</sup> April earlier this year. It appears that changing the junction priorities to create a multi-stop junction is not permitted within these new regulations. The requirement for a STOP sign remains unchanged from the previous version of the TSRGD therefore by changing the priorities it is likely that the junction can only be presented as GIVE WAY.
- 5.5 Once the police investigations are complete into the circumstances of both these fatal accidents there it will be appropriate for us to consider their findings. In the case of Highmoor Road there are already renewed calls for us to reconsider the layout of the junction. At the time of writing this report a petition was being gathered asking for road safety changes to this junction for presentation at the same June meeting of the Sub-committee.

- 5.6 At its meeting in January 2015 the Sub-committee agreed to a change of priorities following the review of the TSRGD. As the revised TSRGD has now been brought into force the January 2015 decision can be fulfilled. Changing the priorities allows the Highmoor Road traffic to pass through the junction without stopping whilst the Albert Road traffic will have to give-way. As explained in the January 2015 report this option of all those considered at that time is the simplest and most cost effective to deliver. The recommendation of this report is to deliver the January 2015 recommendation and keep the junction under review.

## **6. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS**

- 6.1 The delivery of road safety and casualty reduction schemes help to deliver the following Corporate Plan Service Priorities:

- Keeping the town clean, safe, green and active.
- Providing infrastructure to support the economy
- Remaining financially sustainable to deliver these service priorities.

## **6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION**

- 6.1 Our road safety and casualty reduction policies form part of our Local Transport Plan which was last consulted upon in 2010. Some locally promoted changes may require a public consultation process in line with the Local Authorities Traffic Order (Procedure) (England & Wales) Regulations 1996.

## **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 None at this stage but any future proposals for waiting and movement restrictions would be advertised under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

## **8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 8.1 In addition to the Human Rights Act 1998 the Council is required to comply with the Equalities Act 2010. Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 requires the Council to have due regard to the need to:-

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

## **9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The financial position is explained in 4.1. There are no other financial implications as a part of this report.

## **10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 10.1 TM Sub Committee 16<sup>th</sup> January 2014 petition submission. TM Sub Committee 13<sup>th</sup> March 2014 Annual Road Safety Review. TM Sub Committee 11<sup>th</sup> September 2014. TM Sub Committee 4<sup>th</sup> November 2014. TM Sub-committee 15<sup>th</sup> January 2016.

Albert Road junction with Highmoor Road. Further analysis of alternative options following response to close west side of Highmoor Road at its junction with Albert Road.

OPTIONS

1. **Traffic signals** are arguably the next best option in meeting the expectations of the original petition as well as dealing with the very specific accident problem at this junction. Traffic signals will completely remove the Highmoor Road and Albert Road conflicts whilst maintaining all movements at and through the junction. However, due to the very limited space with relatively narrow footways the traffic signals would only be a very basic set-up. Anything other than a two stage operation allowing both opposing approaches on Highmoor Road and then Albert Road to run together is likely to create unacceptable delay. Whilst traffic signals will remove the visibility problems they will not cater for the opposing right turning movements that will have to give way to on-coming vehicles. At busy times a single right turning vehicle will completely block the ability for all following vehicles to proceed. As previously reported a very basic fixed time traffic signal controlled junction could cost in the region of £50,000. Whilst there was some limited support expressed for traffic signals their use in this location is not likely to be popular. This option, not only likely to be unpopular, is relatively expensive to deliver when a more cost effective injury reduction option may be available. Traffic signals should remain a consideration if other measures are not successful in reducing injuries.
2. **Change the priorities at the junction** by making Albert Road stop to Highmoor Road traffic. This option does not change the visibility problem and relies on Albert Road drivers obeying the stop signs and giving way to crossing drivers from Highmoor Road. The perception is that vehicle speed on Albert Road is as much to blame for the accidents at this junction. Whilst changing priorities will have an added positive impact on Albert Road traffic speed, residents of Highmoor Road are likely to be worried that speeding will increase outside their homes. Additional traffic calming measures may be required on all approaches to the junction to support this change and reduce speeds. In making this change there is a fear that it may create new accidents until the change in priorities are fully realised by drivers. This option is by far the most cost effective solution although it has its limitations and does not meet the wider concerns of the original petition. It is, however, worth changing the priorities thus reducing the impact of the very restricted visibility within Highmoor Road. This option can be delivered without any further legal process so it is the easiest and quickest option to deliver.
3. **4-Way STOP** had been raised a number of times within responses to the initial consultation. The Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions (TSRGD) prohibit the use of STOP or GIVE WAY signs on all approaches to a junction, as this would cause uncertainty as to which

vehicles had priority. The TSRGD is an act of parliament and something that we are unable to change therefore we are unable to promote this option.

4. **Re-position the fence line on the south west side** of the junction to improve visibility to the right for drivers exiting Highmoor Road west side. Whilst this may seem an attractive option the fence line and the land that sits behind it is private. In addition, other street furniture (telecommunications cabinet) would also require relocation. Even if the landowner were willing to give up the land, legal processes involved to ensure any future owner does not reclaim the fence line may be lengthy and expensive. This option should remain a consideration depending upon the success of the change in priorities.
5. **A mini roundabout at the junction** was raised in a number of replies to the consultation. Unfortunately this is not a viable option as it requires drivers to give way slightly further back from the junction that currently worsening visibility for drivers. This option offers no obvious benefit and may only worsen safety at this junction.
6. **Remove the central hatch on Albert Road and push the stop line on the west side of Highmoor Road** further into the junction. There was not a lot of call for this within the recent consultation responses. Although, this has been raised by a couple of residents and also CADRA previously. Whilst this may slightly improve visibility concern would be that accidents would thereafter increase.
  - a. This is because the previous right turn accidents may return.
  - b. Also this option may increase the number of drivers not fully stopping and spending less time properly looking before crossing the junction.

This option can remain a consideration as a part of the change of priorities and on-going monitoring of the junction.

7. **Traffic calming measures on Albert Road** to slow speed of drivers travelling north/south. Many of the responses to the consultation raised speeds on Albert Road and this is perceived to be a safety issue that needs addressing. Although, there was a real mix of responses in how to slow drivers on Albert Road with some support for traffic calming and others for a 20mph limit only. Specifically the introduction of road humps received a divided response. Some respondents strongly support the use of road humps whilst others strongly oppose such measures. Other physical measures such as build-outs and chicanes require a regular and even flow in both directions to be effective. The traffic flows on both Highmoor Road and Albert Road are relatively light and tend to be quite tidal. Such traffic conditions do not benefit from build-outs and chicanes so it is unlikely that speeds will be reduced to the extent that will improve safety at the junction. Some on-street parking does exist within

Albert Road creating natural chicanes from time to time and yet despite this the accident problem exists at the junction. Should we choose to use physical traffic calming measures we would typically promote speed cushions as both Highmoor Road and Albert Road are bus routes. Speed cushions are designed to improve the ride for public transport passengers and emergency services. However, with larger cars and wider wheel bases now typical speed cushions are arguably become less effective. Whilst speed within Albert Road received a significant number of comments it does not solve the main cause of the accidents at the junction. Slowing vehicle speeds on Albert Road may reduce the severity of the accident but may not reduce the number of accidents occurring. Sinusoidal humps were raised a few times as a solution for dealing with Albert Road vehicle speed. The sinusoidal profile is similar to that of a round-top hump but has a radiused initial rise. They were found to be just as effective at reducing vehicle speeds as the conventional humps, but were far more comfortable to cycle over. As the accidents are specific to vehicles crossing from Highmoor Road west side to east side promoting a much wider traffic calming scheme is much more difficult to demonstrate best value.

8. **Close the eastern side of Highmoor Road to West-East traffic** in the form of a "build out", thus preventing Highmoor Road traffic crossing the junction west to east as well as left and right turns from Albert Road. This option is not likely to gain support and we should expect a similar reaction to any closure to that already received. Furthermore, this option would not solve the visibility problems that currently exist. This is not an option that should remain a consideration.
9. **Close Albert Road northbound at the junction of Highmoor Road** except to public transport and other public services, such as the emergency services. This removes the vehicle conflict completely but is not likely to gain support as Albert Road is considered as one of the main residential routes serving Caversham Heights. This is similar to the closure already promoted and likely to receive the same response. This is not an option that should remain a consideration.
10. **Use of a Mirror at the junction.** Mirrors are not an approved road sign and are not available of use without specific central government approval. We are required to demonstrate that we have tried other options before applying for approval to use a mirror. Mirrors are restricted on road safety grounds as it is very difficult to judge vehicle speed in a reflection. This is not an option that should remain a consideration.